

Town of



# AMHERST *Massachusetts*

Office of the Town Manager  
Town Hall  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, MA 01002

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## AMHERST SELECT BOARD MEETING July 8, 2009

### New Business

To: Stephanie O'Keeffe, Amherst Select Board Chair  
Members of the Amherst Select Board

From: Laurence Shaffer, Town Manager

Re: Performance Review – Town Manager Goals – 2009

Date: July 8, 2009

The Amherst Select Board approved eight (8) specific performance goals for the Town Manager for Fiscal Year 2009 (FY 09) on February 2, 2009. A copy of the memo that outlines those goals is attached. This memorandum summarizes progress to date upon the eight performance goals identified in the attached memo.

### **Goal 1 – Revenue crisis; reduce expenses; raise revenue; create additional efficiencies and effectiveness; collective bargaining negotiations**

The completed FY 10 budget is a strong example of leadership. The last year witnessed an unprecedented fiscal crisis that required many changes. Those changes include the reorganization of LSSE and the reduction of local tax contribution of over \$250,000.00 without a dramatic impact upon services; the elimination of tax contribution for social service agencies while identifying and securing additional revenue to fund important social services (CDBG, Waxman Fund - \$115,000.00 and Amherst College - \$20,000.00); completion of all four ambulance service contracts at increased rates for area towns; increase in the rates for insurance purposes for all ambulance service recipients; regionalization of Veterans' Services with Northampton and the hill communities; regionalization of emergency dispatch with the nine towns and the University has the funding from a grant of \$125,000.00 to study the feasibility of this important effort; the relocation and reorganization of the Building and Inspection Department and Community Development Department into one suite; the planning, development and advocacy of a town budget that is less by \$1,300,000.00 without a remarkable reduction in services; contract Assessing Department services to Pelham; contract Health Department services to Northampton; wrote and secured grant to study a Business Improvement District (BID); initiate the team to identify and implement programs to generate funds other than tax dollars to support critical functions; identify and implement the reorganization of Cherry Hill Golf Course to generate revenue and reduce expense; centralization of IT staff into a single office suite adjacent to servers.

**Goal 2 – The Town Manager shall continue to strengthen relationships with UMass and the Colleges and to actively support community groups.**

I have an excellent relationship with the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst College and Hampshire College. The positive relationships have produced the Strategic Partnership Agreement with the University and have generated \$250,000.00 in contributions from Amherst College. Hampshire College has been extremely cooperative with the land needed to achieve the Atkins Corner Road Project. I have an excellent relationship with many community groups. My relationship with the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce is great. I have a strong relationship with Promoting Downtown Amherst. Last year, I was the guest speaker to the League of Women Voters, the Amherst Club, the Amherst Rotary Club, Applewood condominium owners, and the Chamber of Commerce. I have participated in many presentations on ACTV. I have a weekly radio spot on WHAI in Greenfield, MA. I attend a significant number of community events as a representative of the town. In short, I am highly visible and always available.

**Goal 3 – Improve employee morale**

I have met with every employee group this year at least twice. Those meetings were designed to provide information to employees on the development of the budget and to hear their suggestions and comments as to how the budgetary challenges might be addressed. Those meetings have been very successful. I will continue the practice into this year. I met with each employee affected by lay-off or position elimination with the goal to reduce the impact that job loss might have upon them. Those meetings resulted in agreements to extend employment to birth dates in order to improve upon retirement, separation agreements that avoided bumping that would have eliminated other employees from town service and I even extended an employment date for an individual whose husband's entry visa would be impacted by her early termination. In short, I made every effort to inject compassion and consideration into a difficult process and I believe that all employees understand and appreciate the initiative. With the assistance of the Health Department, a wellness and fitness program has been created and implemented that focuses upon exercise as a strong component of wellness. The Human Resources Office has been very productive this year. It set up a highly successful and credible system to recruit, test and select a new Fire Chief and Police Chief. Systems to share and receive information with employees were developed and implemented as a result of the employee meetings.

**Goal 4 – Keep the Select Board informed**

The Town Manager's report scheduled for each Select Board meeting has been a successful way to communicate important information to the Select Board. I have made significant efforts to notify the Select Board of issues of importance to the town on those occasions when issues are urgent or of immediate gravity. I am committed to a new process that will allow for more initial input from the Select Board on collective bargaining agreement negotiation.

**Goal 5 – Economic Development Plan**

In conjunction with town staff and with consideration to the Master Plan, an executive Economic Development Plan was delivered to the Select Board on May 29, 2009. A copy of the plan is attached. I believe that the plan is a solid and practical compendium to the economic development component of the Master Plan. I look forward to Select Board review and comment.

### **Goal 6 – Encourage staff to provide suggestions**

Staff meetings and department head meetings have been conducted not only for the purpose of providing information on the budgetary challenges but, more importantly, to solicit ideas and input on steps that might be taken to reduce cost or increase revenue. Employees have been encouraged to forward suggestions directly to me via e-mail. Those suggestions have been reviewed and considered for implementation. One of the most important tools for evaluating employee and staff suggestions is the budget process itself. The Select Board has seen the work that was done collaboratively with LSSE to review all programs for opportunities for improvements or increased revenue. Ideas must be measured empirically against actual input and output. The budgetary system and framework is the best place for that to occur without creating a separate mechanism.

### **Goal 7 – Collect customer satisfaction feedback**

Customer satisfaction feedback is collected by many of the line departments and is available in the budget. I am presently considering a system that allows for both contributions and citizen feedback as a part of our typical correspondence to citizens through tax bills and other town wide publications and mailing lists. I think that it is important to not only provide citizens the opportunity for feedback but to make a contribution in an area of their interest. Certainly, citizen input and fund raising are complimentary. This effort is a work in progress and as we learn more, I will have more to report on the direction and degree of success. I have placed a "suggestion box" in the first floor lobby of Town Hall and I hope to use that as an initial portion of this effort.

### **Goal 8 – Centralize system to chart the recruitment and retention of volunteers**

Volunteers have played a significant role in providing critical services for the citizens of Amherst. Departments have traditionally maintained the list of volunteers specifically for their department. The reasons for maintaining separate targeted recruitment, training and retention of volunteers are logical. First, many of the various volunteers have particular requirements for service. The Health Department and the Emergency Nurse Corp and the Fire Department and the call and student force have very significant differences in training requirements and recruitment criteria. Second, the concept of unit cohesion, the affinity that various groups have for their fellow members and profession, would not be enhanced by dilution of identity by centralization. Volunteers for the most part, have a targeted area that they wish to participate within. Volunteers do not typically come forward indifferent to the area for which they wish to contribute. Third, centralization would bring some costs and little to no benefit to the task of providing improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention. Consequently, I have reviewed and rejected the value of instituting a centralized system to recruit, train and retain volunteers.

To conclude, any review of performance must include a statement of my complete indebtedness to the whole Town of Amherst team. Nothing can be accomplished without their devotion and stellar achievement. I would like to acknowledge and thank them for all they do for Amherst.



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To: Larry Shaffer, Town Manager  
From: Stephanie O'Keeffe, Select Board Chair  
Date: February 3, 2009  
Re: FY09 Town Manager Performance Goals

At our Monday, February 2, 2009 meeting, the Select Board voted unanimously to approve these eight performance goals for FY09. Your patience and cooperation as we worked through this process for the first time has been much appreciated, and your input in helping to craft effective goals was invaluable. It is our hope that this foundation we have created together will provide clarity of mutual expectations, and make for a more productive means of goal setting and performance evaluation for the future.

## **Town Manager Goals for FY09**

1. The Town Manager shall develop specific recommendations for consideration by the Select Board to address the revenue crisis, including the generation of new revenue; reducing expenses through efficiencies in Town structure and service delivery; negotiating contracts through the collective bargaining process that are reflective of the community's capability and willingness to support; and pursuit of an increased economic development profile to increase the tax base and reduce the burden on residential property taxpayers.
2. The Town Manager shall continue to strengthen relationships with UMass and the Colleges, and to actively engage community groups.
3. The Town Manager shall develop and implement a plan that improves morale and lines of communication among all employees. The Town Manager will incorporate Human Resources into the goal of improving morale, as a source for training, wellness, professional development and addressing workplace concerns.

4. The Town Manager shall work more closely with the Select Board by helping the Select Board to become more informed; responding to and initiating improved communication efforts; allowing the Select Board more opportunity to provide feedback on policy/practice initiatives and changes before implementation; and involving the Select Board in the determination of collective bargaining strategies.
5. The Town Manager shall create an economic development plan, informed by the Master Plan, presenting strategies and goals (including target areas, plans for pursuit) to the Select Board for input and making adjustments accordingly. Once approved by the Select Board, the plan will serve as a reference and guidance document that informs how the Town moves forward in this area.
6. The Town Manager shall encourage staff at all levels to provide suggestions for improving the efficiency of providing services and utilizing resources, within and across departments; and shall create procedures for collecting and considering the suggestions.
7. The Town Manager shall research and propose ways to collect "customer satisfaction" feedback and suggestions from the public, regarding interactions with staff and departments, and the process of obtaining services and assistance.
8. The Town Manager shall assess opportunities for creating a centralized system for targeted recruitment, training and retention of volunteers to address needs across Town departments.

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To: Stephanie O'Keeffe, Chair, Select Board  
Members of the Select Board

From: Laurence Shaffer, Town Manager

Date: May 29, 2009

Re: Town Manager Goals FY 2009

Please find attached the memo dated February 3, 2009 that outlines the performance goals for the town manager for fiscal year 2009. I draw your attention to item number five which states as follows:

*The town manager shall create an economic development plan informed by the master plan presenting strategic strategies and goals (including targeted areas plans for pursuit) to the Select Board for input and making adjustments accordingly. Once approved by the Select Board, the plan will serve as a reference and guidance document that informs how the town moves forward in this area.*

I have attached for your consideration the section of the master plan entitled "Economic Development". I will use that as a general guide to address the goal that has been identified by the Select Board. The Economic Development Plan lists as its goal, the following:

*To strengthen, diversify and grow the economic base in employment opportunities in the Town through smart development in the downtown, village centers and commercial zones. Initiatives will be focused on clusters of businesses, mixed services, high technology/clean industries, cultural attractions, education, tourism and agricultural resources. Such development will maintain, improve and sustain quality of life, ecological consciousness, and social values.*

My plan for economic development for the Town of Amherst is as follows:

1. Identifying opportunities to grow the tax base for the Town in sustainable fashion in order to provide the resources necessary to sustain and maintain public services. That tax base will be developed by utilizing the following mechanisms.
  - a. Partnerships- the town manager shall create the necessary partnerships with the various institutions, public and private, in the community to promote economic development. Those partnerships include the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst College, Hampshire College, the Emily Dickinson Museum, Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce, and Promoting Downtown Amherst. Those partnerships developed to continue the conversation to ensure that opportunities for expansion are known and that opportunities are not missed.

- b. The town manager shall create partnerships with those entities outside of the community to identify opportunities as they make themselves available. Those partnerships include the Western Massachusetts Council on Economic Development, the Franklin County Planning Commission, the President's Office at the University of Massachusetts, the developers and property owners of the Pomeroy Center, and the North Amherst PRP.
2. The town manager will identify those parcels in the town that appear to maintain the prerequisite characteristics necessary for either development or redevelopment and to seek out opportunities to the private and public sector to bring responsible, as defined by the Master Plan, development to the community.
3. The town manager has established an administrative goal of growing the tax base by ten percent over ten years, or one percent per year. That would mean that the town's tax base would grow annually by approximately twenty million (\$20,000,000.00) dollars of growth from new development.
4. The town manager has identified certain areas as being prime for either redevelopment or development. That includes University Drive from Route 9 to Amity Street, Sunderland Road professional research part zone property owned by the Patterson family and the Central Business District.
5. The town manager shall work with Hampshire College to assist in the development of Veridian Village and the Cultural Village as part of the new village center at Atkins Corner.
6. The town manager will work with the University of Massachusetts Amherst to assist in locating a firm or firms to occupy a professional research park located on the Patterson property.
7. The town manager shall work with Amherst College to assist in the redevelopment of the Lord Jeffery Inn.
8. The town manager shall work with the Planning Downtown Amherst and with the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce to promote a Business Improvement District (BID) downtown.
9. The town manager shall work with housing concerns to seek out opportunities to provide high quality student housing in areas of the community where such housing is authorized by zoning and does not disrupt the lifestyle of the community at large.
10. The town manager shall work with the Amherst Historical Commission, Public Arts Commission, Emily Dickinson Museum, local museums, the educational institutions, owners of local lodging facilities, and the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce to undertake the following:
  - a. Develop and implement short-term improvements such as signs, guidebooks, websites, and centralized marketing of historical and cultural resources and events.



- b. Develop and begin to implement an action plan for Sustainable Cultural Tourism, in order to support, enhance, and build on the cultural/historical tourism economy in Amherst.
11. Complete, expand, and improve the existing sign system, to mark historic districts and village centers, and encourage tourism. An improved system of historic site signs is needed for tourists and visitors, and can also be essential for increasing overall public awareness about—and thereby protecting—Amherst's historic resources. The Historical Commission, Design Review Board, Department of Public Works, Chamber of Commerce, and the Town/Commercial Relations Committee, among others, should engage in a collaborative initiative to update, enhance, and fund the sign system in Amherst.
12. Develop outreach tools (tours, print publications, web sites, etc.) to disseminate knowledge of Amherst's history among the public. Building public awareness of the unique historic resources of Amherst and the benefits of protecting them in terms of quality of life, community character, and economic benefits is a critical step to securing the support of the general public, property owners, and elected officials in the pursuit of historic preservation initiatives. The Amherst community should develop outreach tools such as bus and walking tours, brochures, websites, and workshops in order to build public awareness about Town history.
13. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to encourage sustainable cultural tourism. Thoughtful development of cultural tourism can help preserve Amherst's unique character while strengthening and diversifying the local economy. The Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce publicizes a Visitor's Guide that provides a variety of information about local historic and cultural attractions. The community should continue to work with the Chamber to expand its efforts to promote cultural tourism in the community.

I look forward to discussing this note with you.

enclosures



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8. The Town Manager shall assess opportunities for creating a centralized system for targeted recruitment, training and retention of volunteers to address needs across Town departments.

## 5. Economic Development

Blue text represents ongoing revisions.

Red text represent potential revisions involving policy issues under review.

### A. Goal

*To strengthen, diversify and grow the economic base and employment opportunities in the town, through smart development in the downtown, village centers, and commercial zones. Initiatives will be focused on clusters of businesses, mixed services, high technology/clean industries, cultural attractions, education, tourism and agricultural resources. Such development will maintain, improve and sustain quality of life, ecological consciousness and social values.*

### B. Overview

The presence of institutions of higher education in Amherst has had a significant impact on the economy of the Town. In fact, the University of Massachusetts, Amherst College, and Hampshire College are Amherst's greatest source of employment. These institutions offer stable employment levels and have low turnover. In the past, there have been a limited amount number of high-paying private sector jobs available within Amherst that were not connected to the educational institutions. In the last decade or so, however, there has been a marked increase in the number of small consulting firms and 'hidden tech' businesses using Internet technologies to take advantage of the information resources of Amherst. A number of themes recur throughout this chapter, including: the desire for industrial research parks and encouragement of business development; the improvement and development of the downtown and village centers; the broadening of partnerships with the colleges and University; and the desire to attract, encourage, and retain technological, information-based, and creative businesses within Amherst.



## Master Plan

Relevant plans and policy documents:

- *Atkins Corner Sustainable Development Master Plan – Action Steps for a Better Amherst [November 2000 – February 2002]*
- *Downtown Action Plan [2002, as augmented by TCR 2007 review]*
- *Town Center Streetscape Design Guidelines Manual [2001]*
- *Overall Economic Development Plan: Five Year Update [1999]*

### C. Existing Conditions

The University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute has prepared a full assessment of the Town's economic profile and conditions. The complete Existing Conditions and Trends report can be found in Appendix A. This section summarizes the report's key points related to economic development:

- **Employment is concentrated in educational services:** The employment base of Amherst is stable, but relatively narrow as compared to the rest of the Pioneer Valley and Massachusetts. Employment is concentrated primarily within educational services,

including the University of Massachusetts, Hampshire College, and Amherst College. Of the 14,121 jobs in Amherst in 2006, 58.2 percent of them were in educational services. UMass Amherst is the second largest employer in western Massachusetts, with about 5,500 employees—over 1500 of those employees live in Amherst.

- **Local businesses are dependent on educational institutions:** The retail sector within Amherst is extremely reliant upon expenditures from the students, faculty, and staff at the University and Colleges. This is not surprising, given the Town's large student population and the economic significance of these institutions.
- **Modest but steady growth in retail sales:** A significant proportion of retail sales in Hampshire County (11.6 percent) occur within Amherst. The U.S. Economic Census for 1997 and 2002 shows that Amherst has experienced modest but steady growth in many retail sectors between those years. The concentration of retail sales in Amherst are: Food and Beverage stores; Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book and Music stores; Building Materials and Garden Equipment; Gasoline Stations; and Non-store Retailers (such as mail-order businesses).
- **Real estate rental rates:** Retail space in Amherst ranges from \$8.50 per square foot to \$14.50 per square foot. By comparison, nearby Northampton has retail rentals ranging from \$12 to \$30 per square foot, depending on the location. These somewhat comparable figures indicate that Amherst is a desirable, although less robust retail location as compared to Northampton.
- **Limited job growth:** The jobs which exist within Amherst, specifically those related to educational services, are relatively stable and grow during times of political consensus on the value of higher education (such as the UMass 250 Plan). Other job sectors in Amherst, particularly traditional businesses such as retail and service businesses, are disproportionately small for a community this size, and are much more vulnerable to economic down-cycles. Despite the recent growth in information-based business and consultancies, this the relative shortage of non-academic job opportunities and growth limits the opportunity for college and high school alumni to stay in the community following graduation, and hampers the community's efforts to support economic and social diversity.

- **Reliance on tax-exempt institutions:** The majority of the Town's private sector companies businesses rely on income generated by patrons from the University and Colleges. These educational institutions are tax-exempt. With relatively static commercial development in Amherst, the fiscal burden for providing municipal services rests heavily on the Town's residential property owners.

The Objectives and Strategies discussed in the remainder of this chapter provide a coherent framework for meeting Amherst's goals for economic development. They focus on a variety of initiatives, including creating vibrancy in the downtown and village centers, as well as attracting more businesses in the research, technology, and creative industries.

### **D. Objectives and Strategies**

This section describes the objectives and strategies that will support the Economic Development goal for the Town of Amherst. For further details regarding the timeframe and entities responsible for each strategy, please see the Implementation Matrix in Chapter 10.

#### **OBJECTIVE E.1 - Support sustainable growth of existing businesses and attract new ones while protecting environmental values.**

Smart growth principles (see [www.smartgrowth.org](http://www.smartgrowth.org)) should be used to support sustainable business growth while preserving Amherst's character and protecting the environment. The following strategies address issues of zoning, infrastructure, and economic policy that can attract targeted industries to Amherst.

### **STRATEGIES**

#### **E.1.A Develop zoning that encourages sustainable high-density mixed-use and residential development within the village centers and downtown.**

Higher density, mixed-use development can be encouraged to enhance and revitalize the village centers and downtown. Connecting and integrating residential areas with businesses and retail uses that provide goods, services, and jobs reduces infrastructure costs and transportation impacts. It creates a mutually-supportive environment in which residents have easier access to services and businesses have better access to a substantial customer base.

#### **E.1.B Market and promote Amherst to targeted business.**

The community should identify the specific types of businesses or industries that it would like to attract to Amherst, and the kinds of growth it wants to see. The Town should work with the business community and other stakeholders (UMass, colleges, property owners, adjacent communities) to

conduct a comprehensive market study to identify specific businesses and industries currently missing from the community that might strengthen Amherst's overall economic fabric. Incentives and marketing tools should then be developed to promote the community and attract the desired types of businesses and industries.

### **E.1.C Make downtown/village centers vital, attractive, and convenient to use.**

Several kinds of strategic improvements should be pursued in the downtown and village centers to create a mutually supportive mix of retail, professional, and residential uses, and an attractive, enjoyable environment for residents and visitors.

**Marketing Studies** - The Town should work with the businesses and property owners in the downtown and village centers to conduct targeted market studies specific to those areas to identify missing goods and services and then act to attract specific types of desired businesses.

**Regulations** - Development regulations should be revised to encourage downtown and village center upper floor residences.

**Physical Improvements** - Attention should be paid to pedestrian amenities, streetscapes, public spaces, parking, wayfinding signs, public art, and other improvements to attract more people to the downtown and village centers.

### **E.1.D Increase the amount of suitably-zoned research park, business, and commercial areas that are provided with appropriate Town infrastructure.**

The Town should evaluate its zoning map and infrastructure plans to see if appropriate lands are available and readily usable for desirable economic growth. New areas may need to be provided with key infrastructure in order to make Amherst a more competitive destination for business investments.

### **E.1.E Increase land zoned for professional, light industrial and commercial use.**

Amherst has a relatively small amount of land area zoned for business activity. The Town should identify and increase the overall acreage of land in Amherst zoned to allow professional and light industrial areas, as well as commercial centers.

### **E.1.F Provide incentives for high priority, targeted development.**

The Town should identify its development priorities, design a package of incentives, and undertake pre-development activities to facilitate development in these areas. These priorities should include evaluating and developing professional research park areas, identifying and redeveloping identified brown-fields sites, as well as pursuing mixed-use infill and



redevelopment projects in downtown and village centers, and carefully expanding those centers. To accomplish this, Amherst could seek out state grant programs, provide density bonuses, provide infrastructure improvements, and/or explore tax incentives.

### **OBJECTIVE E.2 – Support “relocalization” of the Amherst economy**

Many communities around the country are recognizing the value of their own local economies and are engaging in “local first” initiatives. Locally-owned, independent businesses tend to re-circulate a higher percentage of their profits within the local economy, and are more invested in the community’s future. Locally grown produce and locally made products require substantially less transportation and consume fewer energy resources than those brought in from other states or countries. This reduces Amherst’s environmental footprint while supporting local markets.

Promoting a sustainable local economy also helps Amherst maintain its distinctive community character.

### **STRATEGIES**

#### **E.2.A Hire an Economic Development Director.**

The Town should create the permanent position of Economic Development Director to work with the Chamber of Commerce, local merchants, professionals, farmers, tradesfolk, artisans, and government to foster and coordinate economic development efforts in Amherst.

#### **E.2.B Support and expand initiatives to market local products, support local businesses, and services.**

One of the first responsibilities of an Economic Development Director would be to work with the community to develop specific ways to support and encourage local business. Examples might include:

- An Amherst Grown/Amherst Made sticker might be made available to local businesses through the Chamber of Commerce, to help shoppers identify local products.
- Amherst’s longstanding Farmer’s Market on the Town Common is a sound local economic tradition that should be replicated in new and innovative ways. An indoor facility allowing year-round operation of a downtown or village center farmers’ market should be explored. An outdoor marketplace should be considered for Kendrick Park. Downtown sidewalk vending could be encouraged with appropriate regulation.
- Existing programs that offer discounts to downtown business patrons who can demonstrate that they shop at other local businesses should be expanded and replicated in Amherst’s outlying village centers and commercial areas.

**E.2.C Explore a reloadable cash-substitute "Amherst Card" that could be used for local shopping, entertainment, dining, parking, transit, and event or attraction admission.**

An "Amherst Card" could be used by residents and visitors to easily navigate parking, transit, and shopping, and other activities in the downtown. The Town should work with representatives from the colleges and business community to determine the feasibility of the card, potential market, security issues, and costs.

**OBJECTIVE E.3 - Promote downtown as a key cultural, commercial and entertainment center of Amherst.**

Downtown Amherst is a great asset that can be better utilized as a cultural, commercial, and entertainment center. The following strategies suggest ways to enhance the downtown as the vibrant heart of the community.

**STRATEGIES**

**E.3.A Conduct a broad market assessment of the downtown to better target businesses and visitors.**

As part of a marketing study (see E.1.C), the community should conduct an assessment of existing assets and current needs in the downtown in terms of the "creative economy"—the arts and cultural, commercial, and entertainment opportunities. The Town's Economic Development Director, working with the Chamber of Commerce and Promoting Downtown Amherst (PDA), should identify key aspects of the downtown and market and enhance them in order to attract more businesses and visitors.

**E.3.B Explore cooperative business, promotional and marketing ventures that reinforce local investment and control.**

In addition to expanding cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce, Promoting Downtown Amherst, and the Town, the business community and the Town should explore the creation of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) to enable greater private investment and participation in the improvement of the downtown business district and village centers.

**E.3.C Resolve parking needs and improve accessibility to and circulation within downtown.**

The Town should investigate a variety of transportation strategies to meet parking needs and improve circulation in the downtown. Initiatives may range from developing an off-street parking facility, to maximizing on-street parking opportunities, to investing in public and alternative transportation infrastructure that can reduce the number of cars on the road. Signalization and other traffic circulation issues should also be examined.

**E.3.D Develop downtown and the Town's natural resources as tourism destinations by leveraging existing cultural, historical, entertainment and education resources, providing inviting streetscapes and developing new attractions.**

Tourism provides a net economic benefit to the community by bringing outside dollars into Amherst. The community should examine ways to further enhance the attractions and amenities found in the downtown and surrounding natural areas in order to emphasize tourism as a key component of the Town's economy, while planning for ways to protect these important resources and mitigate the impacts of tourism. See NC.1.

**E.3.E Capture "secondary (follow-on) market" of visitors to colleges and university.**

UMass and the Colleges attract a large number of visitors throughout the year (families, prospective students, conference attendees, etc.). The Town should collaborate with educational institutions in order to market local attractions and amenities and fully capture the follow-on tourism market associated with these schools.

**OBJECTIVE E.4 - Broaden and leverage partnerships with UMass and the Colleges.**

The Town, UMass, and the Colleges should pursue mutually beneficial partnerships in order to promote economic development, undertake research and technology enterprises, and create more learning and job opportunities for college and university students.

**STRATEGIES**

**E.4.A Develop and implement a shared town-gown strategy for economic development to achieve common goals.**

The Town, the business community, and the University and Colleges should work together to develop a set of shared economic development goals that can be effectively pursued through town-gown partnerships.

**E.4.B Promote economic development projects at the University and colleges that produce tax revenues for the Town.**

Through partnerships between the Town and the University and colleges, it is possible to create economic development projects that will produce additional revenues for the Town and benefit all Amherst residents.

**E.4.C Establish the real cost of the University and colleges to the Town and negotiate fair compensation.**

The Town provides a variety of public services that support the University and colleges. An external, impartial fiscal analysis should be undertaken to examine the real costs and benefits that these institutions bring to the Town. Once this is established, agreements can be made to ensure that the Town is compensated fairly.

**E.4.D Encourage and assist UMass in its efforts to create a research park that provides for commercialization and business expansion of university/college research, including incubator space for companies.**

Economic development stakeholders should work with UMass to design a research facility that provides space for research, high-tech firms, and start-up companies. Such a facility would provide the opportunity for collaborative relationships between the business and University community, and could catalyze further economic development in the Town.

**E.4.E Explore development of taxable student housing in appropriate locations.**

Providing private, student-village housing for UMass students would generate tax revenues and reduce pressure on rents for affordable housing elsewhere in Town. Such housing should be well-designed and appropriately sited to respect the context and values of the surrounding Amherst community. See also LU.1.B and H.7.

**E.4.F Share university, college and Town facilities and resources for mutual benefit.**

The Town, University, and colleges should identify and evaluate existing assets and facilities that could be shared to further enhance quality of life in the community and attract additional economic activity.

**OBJECTIVE E.5 - Improve the regulatory environment to encourage business development.**

The following strategies suggest how the Town should review and update its regulatory processes in order to attract new businesses to Amherst.

**STRATEGIES**

**E.5.A Re-examine administrative permit procedures and regulatory by-laws, streamline business regulation and expedite permitting to provide regionally competitive, responsive and timely services to businesses.**

A transparent, streamlined, and responsive business permitting process can greatly improve Amherst's competitiveness in attracting new businesses. Targeted industries and businesses should receive extra guidance and support during the permitting process.

**E.5.B Allow pre-permitting in targeted development zones.**

In appropriate target areas, establish basic requirements for appropriate uses, site planning, and design, so that projects which meet those Town requirements can obtain approvals through a streamlined permit process.

**OBJECTIVE E.6 - Create an Integrated Economic Development Program.**

Amherst's economic development stakeholders should work together to set strategic priorities and identify who will take the lead in all aspects of the Town's economic growth and revitalization.

**STRATEGIES**

**E.6.A Organize and develop financial and staff resources to support the Town's economic development program and strategic plan.**

In order to ensure that economic development activities are successful, a basic level of staffing and funding is required with specific responsibility for coordinating initiatives, tracking their progress, and publicizing successes. Sufficient staff resources can ensure that Amherst stays on track in working towards its economic goals.

**E.6.B Assign a permanent committee to help oversee development and implementation of a comprehensive economic development strategic plan.**

A Town committee should be assigned responsibility for working with an Economic Development Director to oversee ongoing implementation of Amherst's economic development strategic plan. Membership of this committee should represent the Amherst's diverse economic development interests and organizations.

**OBJECTIVE E.7 - Encourage physical and technological infrastructure that support business and industrial growth.**

The Town should invest in infrastructure and technological advancements that enable business attraction and retention.

**STRATEGIES**

**E.7.A Improve and expand internet communication/broadband (including wireless availability) throughout the Town, including high-speed connections (Internet2 and other state of the art technology).**

Many communities around the country are pursuing technological advantages that can give them an edge in attracting and retaining businesses and enhancing quality of life for residents. Amherst should undertake steps to ensure that all areas are covered by high-speed internet providers. The Town should also examine the possibility of offering expanded free wireless connection in strategic locations, such as the downtown.

### **E.7.B Support growth of burgeoning technology and creative economy businesses, including development of necessary facilities.**

The Town should target investments to attract innovating industries such as technology firms and “creative economy” businesses that have a focus on arts, culture, and design. Amherst can create targeted business attraction and retention programs that incorporate tax incentives, workforce development assistance, and infrastructure and service amenities.

### **OBJECTIVE E.8 - Develop the current and future workforce to enhance economic opportunities.**

Current Amherst employment opportunities do not adequately support those interested in occupations (trades and other professions) other than education. Key issues underlying this objective are the need to address socio-economic balance in Amherst and the potential costs (social justice aspects) of not taking action. There is the concern that long-time residents and their children are being driven out of Amherst in search of work and, eventually, other places to live. The following strategies examine how education, training, and mentoring opportunities can be used to enhance Amherst’s workforce base and increase the Town’s economic prosperity.

### **STRATEGIES**

#### **E.8.A Provide internships in local businesses (including agricultural) to high school and college students.**

Internships are a highly successful means for students to gain valuable work experience while also discovering possible career paths. Internships provide benefits to both the employer and the student while spurring future economic development, since interns are often considered as prospective employees.

#### **E.8.B Create a network of advisors to mentor new businesses in Town ranging from the virtual company to ‘bricks and mortar’ businesses.**

The Town should work cooperatively with local business owners and merchants and with the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce to develop mentoring programs that help increase the likelihood of success of new businesses in the area.

### **OBJECTIVE E.9 - Advocate for changes to state tax regulation in order to allow a reformulation of the Town's tax structure.**

Based on current state laws, property taxes are the primary—and nearly the only—way local municipalities can collect revenue. Most other taxation is controlled by the State. The rates are also capped at a 2.5 percent increase from year to year unless a town-wide override referendum is passed by the voters. There are some efforts currently underway to convince the state legislature to allow municipalities other ways to collect revenues, such as meals and lodging taxes. The Town should advocate for an alternative tax structure.

### **STRATEGIES**

#### **E.9.A Link and partner with other municipal and state-wide advocacy groups to promote significant relief of property taxes.**

Property taxes are a major burden on homeowners in Amherst. Through partnerships with other municipal and State advocacy groups, there is a greater opportunity to make change and relieve homeowners of the property tax burden, which is lowering their quality of life.







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## Unemployment rate in Western Mass. dropped slightly in March

by The Republican Newsroom  
 Tuesday April 21, 2009, 7:45 PM

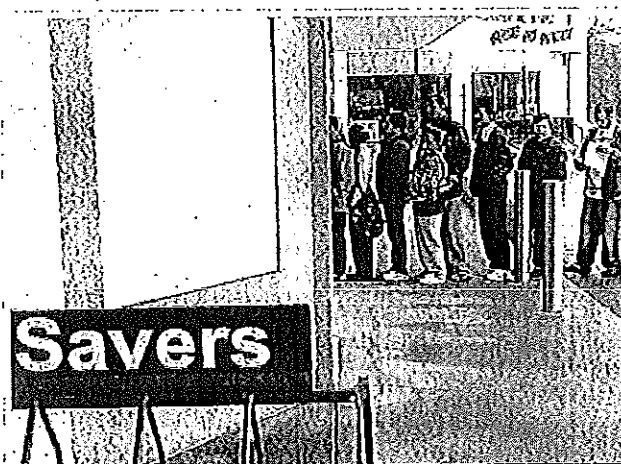


Photo by Dave Roback / The Republican

People looking for jobs line up Tuesday at Savers Thrift Store, which is slated to open on June 11 in West Springfield.

By JIM KINNEY  
 jkinney@repub.com

SPRINGFIELD - Greater Springfield experienced a net gain of 500 jobs in March, according to statistics released Tuesday by the state Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.

The region's unemployment dropped from 8.9 percent in February to 8.7 percent in March. The unemployment rate was 5.5 percent a year ago.

Unemployment in the Amherst area, where the high concentrations of higher education makes for an unusually stable economy, dropped from 4 percent in February to 3.2 percent in March. It was 2.7 percent a year ago, said Rena Kottcamp, research director for the Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance.

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- 413jr -- see garcia i agree with you pa...
- sarcastikbum -- You know I'm glad your justamo...
- sarcastikbum -- This really should read "Bribe..."
- longpastdue -- Justamoron; need I say more, E...
- kyckick -- shutupmeg, ROEL MWJAO...
- HonestyRose -- justmexi: there is a home depot...
- kyckick -- Guess this gives a new spin on...
- kyckick -- This fine young HERO deserves...

## Unemployment rate

Location	Rate		
	Mar.	Feb.	Mar.
Massachusetts	8.2%	8.3%	4.9%
Springfield metropolitan area	8.7%	8.9%	5.5%
Amherst metropolitan area	3.2%	4.0%	2.7%
Greenfield metropolitan area	8.0%	8.1%	4.9%

Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Department

(Click on image to enlarge.)

This above chart shows the unemployment rate for this March and February in comparison with March of last year.

Unemployment in Greenfield and surrounding towns also dropped slightly from 8.1 percent in February to 8 percent in March. It was 5.2 percent in March 2008.

The state's unemployment rate is 8.2 percent, compared with 8.3 percent in February and 4.9 percent a year ago. The national unemployment rate was 8.9 percent in March compared with 8.1 percent in February.

"I would be very hesitant to put too much stock in what you are seeing," said Robert A. Nakosteen, professor of economics and statistics at the Isenberg School of Management at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

The people lined up outside the new Savers Thrift Store at 135 Memorial Drive in West Springfield also had trouble trying to see a sustained recovery in Tuesday's numbers.

The store, which will open for business June 11, is looking to hire about 50 people, said store manager Joseph M. Woodruff.

There were 70 people lined up even before the doors opened at 9 a.m. Company staff had already interviewed more than 100 job seekers in just the first hour and a half. Hiring continues from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. today and Thursday.

"We knew this would happen," Woodruff said. "We knew with the economy that we would get a lot of interest."

Abraham Colon, of Springfield, already works part-time, but with two daughters and a son due to be born April 27, he was hoping he could find more work at the thrift store.

"If you see an opportunity, you've got to take it," said Colon, 30. "Things might look bad today, but tomorrow will come and it might be a better day."

Colon said he's also taking culinary arts courses in hopes of bettering his career prospects.

Woodruff said pay will start at the \$8-an-hour minimum wage. Pay for managers at the store will vary according to a person's experience. He plans to have worker orientation next week with new employees starting to sort donated materials at the store the first full week in May. Savers sells the donated materials for Big Brothers and Big Sisters.

Since the recession began in December 2007, 5.1 million jobs have been lost across the country, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Almost 3.3 million jobs were lost in the last 5 months.

Nakosteen said recent economic news has been mixed, and that type of pattern can be the first sign of a recovery. For example, he said, retail sales numbers are abysmal one day, but statistics the next day showed that companies were ordering more sophisticated computer and communications equipment. The stock market keeps going up and down.

"We should start to feel the effects of the federal stimulus," he said. "We are going to see them through time, but they have to start sometime."

Unemployment tends to be a lagging indicator, he said, and companies will wait for a recovery to take hold before they start hiring again.

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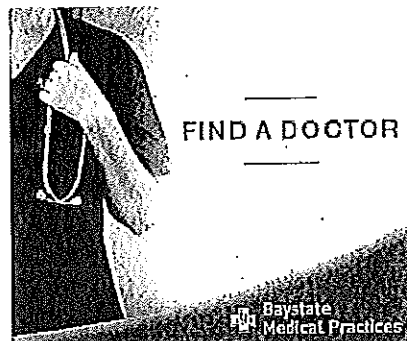
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Posted by **FMU** on 04/21/09 at 8:55PM

Even at the \$8/hour "minimum" for these 50 hires, you'll see probably about 500+ easy applying/interviewed for them...which is a minimum 1/10 chance on average, but technically will be even more since you'll have less qualified candidates for management. So that makes it about 1/15, 1/20 chance you get hired there.

It's only going to get worse this and next year. At least Mr. Colon is trying to better himself with a skill that if marketed right can potentially pay more (otherwise you're a line cook somewhere making maybe 10-11/hour which isn't any better then trying to get into this store).

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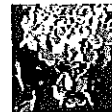
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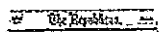
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Municipality  
AMHERST

FY	Residential	Commercial	Industrial	TOTAL REAL	REAL % CHANG E	Personal Property	PERSO NAL % CHANG E	Total REAL + Personal	% of Total Change	Residential Growth	% change Residential	Commercial Growth	% change Commercial	Personal Growth	% change Personal	total growth	% of New Growth	Total Growth
2000	963,840,300	112,818,700	2,952,900	1,079,611,900	3.09%	37,130,300	3.23%	1,116,742,200	3.10%	20,606,800	-12.8%	902,700	532%	1,352,500	22%	22,862,000	2.27%	73%
2001	988,736,000	121,283,900	2,994,500	1,113,014,400	8.46%	38,328,100	13.14%	1,151,342,500	8.61%	17,973,100	16.6%	2,958,580	-50%	2,260,400	37%	26,079,085	2.27%	26%
2002	1,078,564,605	125,424,195	3,156,400	1,207,145,200	16.57%	43,366,100	4.55%	1,250,511,300	15.84%	20,960,105	18.3%	984,010	-66%	2,250,300	0%	28,036,975	2.24%	14%
2003	1,269,406,690	133,142,710	4,628,100	1,407,177,500	2.54%	41,391,500	3.85%	1,448,569,000	2.56%	22,859,297	-7.6%	3,212,354	-23%	4,319,300	92%	30,390,951	2.10%	81%
2004	1,307,490,907	131,439,493	4,029,700	1,442,960,100	16.21%	42,985,900	-14.18%	1,485,946,000	15.33%	38,607,100	68.9%	2,467,900	-3%	1,029,400	-76%	42,104,400	2.83%	18%
2005	1,536,352,054	136,041,446	4,473,700	1,676,867,200	18.39%	36,889,700	15.04%	1,713,756,900	18.31%	48,276,111	25.0%	2,383,175	-3%	7,020,450	582%	57,679,736	3.37%	18%
2006	1,832,502,365	147,780,235	4,900,800	1,985,183,400	0.78%	45,210,430	6.53%	2,045,921,630	0.90%	33,335,005	-30.9%	3,104,095	30%	5,852,240	-77%	42,291,340	2.09%	231%
2007	1,848,463,295	147,436,305	4,811,600	2,000,711,200	1.69%	50,079,360	10.77%	2,084,591,660	-1.89%	20,679,400	-38.0%	4,620,900	-49%	10,464,593	79%	35,764,893	1.75%	92%
2008	1,886,900,759	142,799,941	4,811,600	2,034,512,300	1.69%	50,079,360	10.77%	2,084,591,660	-1.89%	20,679,400	-38.0%	4,620,900	-49%	10,464,593	79%	35,764,893	1.75%	92%
2009	2,000,917,861	147,637,219	4,563,700	2,153,118,800	5.83%	51,143,300	2.12%	2,204,262,100	5.74%	23,434,500	13.3%	1,611,600	-65%	9,022,540	-14%	34,068,640	1.63%	28%
				16,100,302,000				16,529,265,052								344,605,420	30.86%	32%
				1,610,030,200				1,652,926,505								34,460,542	2.14%	
				0.32														

Change in Valuation FY 09 - FY 00	1,087,519,900
% Change	97%
Average Change in Valuation	120,835,544
Total New Growth FY 09 - FY 00	344,605,420
% New Growth	30.9%
% New Growth of Total Change in V	31.7%
Average New Growth	34,460,542



Town of



# AMHERST *Massachusetts*

Office of the Town Manager  
Town Hall  
4 Boltwood Avenue  
Amherst, MA 01002

Laurence Shaffer, Town Manager  
Phone: (413) 259-3002  
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## AMHERST SELECT BOARD MEETING July 8, 2009

### New Business

To: Stephanie O'Keeffe, Amherst Select Board Chair  
Members of the Amherst Select Board

From: Laurence Shaffer, Town Manager

Re: Performance Review – Town Manager Goals – 2009

Date: July 8, 2009

The Amherst Select Board approved eight (8) specific performance goals for the Town Manager for Fiscal Year 2009 (FY 09) on February 2, 2009. A copy of the memo that outlines those goals is attached. This memorandum summarizes progress to date upon the eight performance goals identified in the attached memo.

### **Goal 1 – Revenue crisis; reduce expenses; raise revenue; create additional efficiencies and effectiveness; collective bargaining negotiations**

The completed FY 10 budget is a strong example of leadership. The last year witnessed an unprecedented fiscal crisis that required many changes. Those changes include the reorganization of LSSE and the reduction of local tax contribution of over \$250,000.00 without a dramatic impact upon services; the elimination of tax contribution for social service agencies while identifying and securing additional revenue to fund important social services (CDBG, Waxman Fund - \$115,000.00 and Amherst College - \$20,000.00); completion of all four ambulance service contracts at increased rates for area towns; increase in the rates for insurance purposes for all ambulance service recipients; regionalization of Veterans' Services with Northampton and the hill communities; regionalization of emergency dispatch with the nine towns and the University has the funding from a grant of \$125,000.00 to study the feasibility of this important effort; the relocation and reorganization of the Building and Inspection Department and Community Development Department into one suite; the planning, development and advocacy of a town budget that is less by \$1,300,000.00 without a remarkable reduction in services; contract Assessing Department services to Pelham; contract Health Department services to Northampton; wrote and secured grant to study a Business Improvement District (BID); initiate the team to identify and implement programs to generate funds other than tax dollars to support critical functions; identify and implement the reorganization of Cherry Hill Golf Course to generate revenue and reduce expense; centralization of IT staff into a single office suite adjacent to servers.





**Goal 2 – The Town Manager shall continue to strengthen relationships with UMass and the Colleges and to actively support community groups.**

I have an excellent relationship with the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Amherst College and Hampshire College. The positive relationships have produced the Strategic Partnership Agreement with the University and have generated \$250,000.00 in contributions from Amherst College. Hampshire College has been extremely cooperative with the land needed to achieve the Atkins Corner Road Project. I have an excellent relationship with many community groups. My relationship with the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce is great. I have a strong relationship with Promoting Downtown Amherst. Last year, I was the guest speaker to the League of Women Voters, the Amherst Club, the Amherst Rotary Club, Applewood condominium owners, and the Chamber of Commerce. I have participated in many presentations on ACTV. I have a weekly radio spot on WHAI in Greenfield, MA. I attend a significant number of community events as a representative of the town. In short, I am highly visible and always available.

**Goal 3 – Improve employee morale**

I have met with every employee group this year at least twice. Those meetings were designed to provide information to employees on the development of the budget and to hear their suggestions and comments as to how the budgetary challenges might be addressed. Those meetings have been very successful. I will continue the practice into this year. I met with each employee affected by lay-off or position elimination with the goal to reduce the impact that job loss might have upon them. Those meetings resulted in agreements to extend employment to birth dates in order to improve upon retirement, separation agreements that avoided bumping that would have eliminated other employees from town service and I even extended an employment date for an individual whose husband's entry visa would be impacted by her early termination. In short, I made every effort to inject compassion and consideration into a difficult process and I believe that all employees understand and appreciate the initiative. With the assistance of the Health Department, a wellness and fitness program has been created and implemented that focuses upon exercise as a strong component of wellness. The Human Resources Office has been very productive this year. It set up a highly successful and credible system to recruit, test and select a new Fire Chief and Police Chief. Systems to share and receive information with employees were developed and implemented as a result of the employee meetings.

**Goal 4 – Keep the Select Board informed**

The Town Manager's report scheduled for each Select Board meeting has been a successful way to communicate important information to the Select Board. I have made significant efforts to notify the Select Board of issues of importance to the town on those occasions when issues are urgent or of immediate gravity. I am committed to a new process that will allow for more initial input from the Select Board on collective bargaining agreement negotiation.

**Goal 5 – Economic Development Plan**

In conjunction with town staff and with consideration to the Master Plan, an executive Economic Development Plan was delivered to the Select Board on May 29, 2009. A copy of the plan is attached. I believe that the plan is a solid and practical compendium to the economic development component of the Master Plan. I look forward to Select Board review and comment.



### **Goal 6 – Encourage staff to provide suggestions**

Staff meetings and department head meetings have been conducted not only for the purpose of providing information on the budgetary challenges but, more importantly, to solicit ideas and input on steps that might be taken to reduce cost or increase revenue. Employees have been encouraged to forward suggestions directly to me via e-mail. Those suggestions have been reviewed and considered for implementation. One of the most important tools for evaluating employee and staff suggestions is the budget process itself. The Select Board has seen the work that was done collaboratively with LSSE to review all programs for opportunities for improvements or increased revenue. Ideas must be measured empirically against actual input and output. The budgetary system and framework is the best place for that to occur without creating a separate mechanism.

### **Goal 7 – Collect customer satisfaction feedback**

Customer satisfaction feedback is collected by many of the line departments and is available in the budget. I am presently considering a system that allows for both contributions and citizen feedback as a part of our typical correspondence to citizens through tax bills and other town wide publications and mailing lists. I think that it is important to not only provide citizens the opportunity for feedback but to make a contribution in an area of their interest. Certainly, citizen input and fund raising are complimentary. This effort is a work in progress and as we learn more, I will have more to report on the direction and degree of success. I have placed a “suggestion box” in the first floor lobby of Town Hall and I hope to use that as an initial portion of this effort.

### **Goal 8 – Centralize system to chart the recruitment and retention of volunteers**

Volunteers have played a significant role in providing critical services for the citizens of Amherst. Departments have traditionally maintained the list of volunteers specifically for their department. The reasons for maintaining separate targeted recruitment, training and retention of volunteers are logical. First, many of the various volunteers have particular requirements for service. The Health Department and the Emergency Nurse Corp and the Fire Department and the call and student force have very significant differences in training requirements and recruitment criteria. Second, the concept of unit cohesion, the affinity that various groups have for their fellow members and profession, would not be enhanced by dilution of identity by centralization. Volunteers for the most part, have a targeted area that they wish to participate within. Volunteers do not typically come forward indifferent to the area for which they wish to contribute. Third, centralization would bring some costs and little to no benefit to the task of providing improvements to volunteer recruitment and retention. Consequently, I have reviewed and rejected the value of instituting a centralized system to recruit, train and retain volunteers.

To conclude, any review of performance must include a statement of my complete indebtedness to the whole Town of Amherst team. Nothing can be accomplished without their devotion and stellar achievement. I would like to acknowledge and thank them for all they do for Amherst.

